

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated October 7, 2004. Claims 66, 68 and 70 are pending in the application, all of which are in independent form, and all of which have been amended. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the courtesies and thoughtful treatment accorded Applicant's representative during the December 7, 2004 telephonic interview, although no agreement was reached during that interview. This Amendment incorporates the changes discussed during that interview.

In the Office Action, Claims 66, 68 and 70 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,324,521 (Shiota). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

The present invention generally concerns providing a plurality of services over a network. A request is transmitted by a user terminal for printing an image stored on the network to a service center. Among its many features, the present invention provides for (i) storing, by a service center, items and their prices in a first table, and (ii) storing, by the service center, at least one group, each group having a plurality of service providers associated with at least one common item of the first table, in a second table.

By storing items and their prices in a first table, and storing at least one group having a plurality of service providers associated with at least one common item of the first table in a second table, the prices of items can be collectively updated for a plurality of service providers within the same group, rather than manually updating the prices for each of the plurality of service providers.

Referring specifically to claim language, independent Claim 66 as amended is directed to a method of providing a plurality of services over a network. The method comprises transmitting, by a user terminal, a request for printing an image stored on the network to a service center, and storing, by the service center, items and their prices in a first table. The method also comprises storing, by the service center, at least one group, each group having a plurality of service providers associated with at least one common item of the first table, in a second table, updating, by the service center, the prices of the items in the first table, and calculating, by the service center, a charge related to the request on the basis of referring to the updated first table and the second table. In addition, the method comprises sending a notification of the calculated charge from the service center to the user terminal, forwarding the request from the user terminal to one of the plurality of service providers within the at least one group via the network automatically upon receipt by the service center of an instruction from the user terminal of whether to print, the instruction being responsive to the notification sent to the user terminal of the charge, and performing, by the one of the plurality of service providers, printing of the image according to the request received from the service center.

In a similar manner, independent Claim 68 as amended is directed to a system.

Independent Claim 70 as amended is directed to a service center apparatus for managing a plurality of services provided over a network. The apparatus comprises reception means for receiving a request for printing an image stored on the network, from a user terminal via the network, first storage means for storing items and their prices, and second storage means for storing one or more groups, each group having a plurality of

service providers associated with at least one common item of the first storage means. The apparatus also comprises updating means for updating the prices of the items in the first storage means, calculation means for calculating a charge related to the request on the basis of referring to the updated first storage means and the second storage means, and notification means for sending a notification of the calculated charge to the user terminal. In addition, the apparatus comprises transmission means for transmitting the request to one of the plurality of service providers within the at least one group via the network automatically upon receipt of an instruction from the user terminal of whether to print, the instruction being responsive to the notification sent to the user terminal of the charge.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or suggest the features of the invention of the present invention. In particular, the Shiota patent is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of (i) storing, by a service center, items and their prices in a first table, and (ii) storing, by the service center, at least one group, each group having a plurality of service providers associated with at least one common item of the first table, in a second table.

As understood by Applicants, Shiota discloses a network photographic service which uses a service center. A center server in the service center selects and assigns a laboratory for printing an ordered picture in response to an order information transferred from a customer via a network, so that printing processing can be carried out by the laboratory specified by the customer instead of the center server. See Shiota, Abstract; column 7, lines 3 to 45; and Figure 1. When the center server transmits the order information to the selected laboratory, it records the content of the order and calculates a data storage fee, a communication charge and the like to be paid to each laboratory by

periodically summing up the amount of data transferred. See Shiota, column 9, lines 28 to 33.

The Office Action contended that Shiota *inherently* discloses storing items and their prices in a first table, since Shiota would otherwise be unable to calculate the appropriate charges. Without conceding the correctness of this contention, Applicants respectfully submit that Shiota is still not seen to teach the second table of the present invention. Specifically, Shiota is not seen to disclose anything with regard to storing, by the service center, at least one group having a plurality of service providers associated with at least one common item of the first table, in a second table. In addition, Shiota is not seen to disclose or to suggest the attendant benefits that such storing of at least one group in a second table provides, such as the ability to collectively update the prices of items for a plurality of service providers within the same group by updating the prices within the first table. Moreover, because Shiota does not have the claimed second table, it also cannot calculate the charge based on both the first and second tables.

Accordingly, based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, independent Claims 66, 68 and 70 as amended are believed to be allowable over the applied reference.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa,
California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to
our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ed Kmett', written over a horizontal line.

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